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ABSTRACT

Total Physical Response is a strategy for learning second languages developed by James J. Asher. The Tomatis program, developed in France by Alfred Tomatis, is a method for treating dyslexia and communication problems and is also used for teaching basic elements of foreign languages. Suggestology is a psychotherapeutic system based on yogic techniques of physical and mental relaxation, created in Bulgaria by Georgi Lozanov. Suggestopedia is the application of suggestology to education, and specifically to foreign language instruction. Although seemingly different, the three methods have important elements in common: (1) they are based on the way children learn their native language, that is, by acquiring listening comprehension before speaking, reading, and writing skills. (2) They share the premise that learning a second language should be a "natural" experience with emphasis on communicative competence and realistic utterances. (3) They perceive language globally, with attention to detail emphasized later in the learning process. (4) They emphasize use of the brain's right hemisphere, for implicit learning. (MSE)

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Three Methods for Language Acquisition: Total Physical Response, the Tomatis Program; Suggestopedia

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Abstract

Total Physical Response is a strategy for learning second languages developed by James J. Asher, a professor of psychology at San José State University. Developed in France by a medical doctor, Alfred Tomatis, the Tomatis Program is a method for treating dyslexia and communication problems, on the one hand, and teaching basic elements of foreign languages, on the other. Suggestology, a psychotherapeutical system based on yogic techniques of physical and mental relaxation, was created in Bulgaria by Georgi Lozanov, a medical doctor and therapist. Suggestopedia is the application of Suggestology to the field of education and, in particular, to the teaching of foreign languages.

Although at first glance very different one from the other, Total Physical Response (TPR), the Tomatis Method and Suggestopedia have a number of important elements in common, elements that make them successful, according to the research thus far conducted, especially with beginning students.

The three methods are based on the way in which children learn their native tongue, a "successful" approach in which listening comprehension precedes speaking which, in turn, precedes reading and writing. Such memory-enhancing and linguistic-structuring devices as songs, games and play activity or role-playing are an integral part of all three "language-acquisition" systems.

All three methods are based on the premise that learning a second language should be a "natural" experience. Emphasis is

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placed on communicative competence and language materials are in the form of realistic utterances: commands, dialogues, etc. Materials used are based on situations that students would normally encounter in real life.

Language in all three methods is perceived globally or, in Asher's words, in "chunks." Attention to detail comes later. Learning by these systems is "holistic" in that the learning process contributes to the personal growth and satisfaction of the student. The classroom atmosphere is non-threatening and there is constant positive feedback regarding student achievement. Special significance is assigned to the teacher's personality, as well as his/her competence.

All three methods, to paraphrase Asher, "play to the right hemisphere" of the brain. In TPR the student masters the basic linguistic code of the target language through physical activity, coordination of language with body movement and indirect attention. While listening to the "filtered music" and a maternal voice reading a story during the passive phase of the Tomatis program, the child is usually engaged in drawing and games. The materials are absorbed through indirect attention or unconscious assimilation. In Suggestopedia, the <u>séance</u> or session is especially designed to promote the absorption of language materials through unconscious assimilation; rhythmic presentation, special tone of voice, music and relaxation techniques are used to enhance the "absorption" process.

Three Methods for Language Acquisition: Total Physical Response; The Tomatis Program; Suggestopedia

W. Jane Bancroft

November 1984

If one has occasion to peruse current anthologies of "successful" language methods, one will probably notice that many of these are largely based on what is termed implicit learning, i.e., the student learns a language by engaging in physical or creative activity; through indirect attention or unconscious assimilation. In many current methods, language is not learned exclusively in an explicit manner through the presentation of drills and rules; it is acquired implicitly in a manner similar to the way in which one absorbs information by watching television. According to Stephen Krashen, language fluency comes from acquisition and this acquisition process is largely subconscious. In the paper at hand, three methods will be discussed which are based on various forms of implicit learning or language acquisition: Total Physical Response; the Tomatis Method (or Program); Suggestopedia.

According to its founder, James J. Asher, a professor of psychology at San José State University in California, Total Physical Response (or TPR) is a learning strategy that is based on the way in which children learn their native language. Asher believes that there are three critical elements in the learning

of one's first language and that each of these elements should be applied to the acquisition of a second (or foreign) language.

The first element to be considered is that listening precedes speaking. When children learn their native tongue, they demonstrate a listening comprehension of many complex utterances before they actually produce any intelligible speech. Secondly, listening skill is acquired, according to Asher, in a particular way, through an intimate relationship between language and the body or bodily movement. Utterances, usually commands from adults, are used to manipulate or direct the orientation, location and locomotion of the child's body. The child moves in space or makes gestures in answer to such commands as "Come here !" "Don't make a fist when I'm dressing you !" "Pick up the red truck and put it in the toy box in your room !" Language learning in childhood is based on action responses and play activity. Thirdly, the acquisition of listening skill produces a "readiness" for the child to speak. In Asher's opinion, speaking is like walking in that attempts to speed up the appearance of this "behavior" before the child is ready to manifest it may be futile. As listening comprehension develops, there comes a time when the child is ready to speak, when he spontaneously begins to produce utterances.

Asher's hypothesis is that the brain and the nervous system are biologically programmed to acquire language, whether the first or the second, in a particular sequence and in a particular mode. The sequence is listening before speaking and the

mode is the synchronization of language with the individual's body movements. Language is orchestrated to a choreography of the human body.

Asher uses his ideas regarding the way in which children learn their native tongue to build his instructional strategy for children or adults learning a second language. His "strategy" is based on the following principles: 1) Listening comprehension should be developed in advance of speaking; 2) Understanding the foreign language should be developed through movements of the student's body. The imperative is a powerful aid, according to Asher, because the instructor can utter commands to manipulate student behavior. 3) The instructor should not attempt to force speaking in a beginning class. At a given point in time, the individual student will spontaneously begin to produce utterances.

TPR is a teaching strategy that uses the imperative form to teach vocabulary and grammar to beginning students. The commands are carefully sequenced so that only three or four new items are presented at once. Depending on class size, from fifteen to thirty new items can be presented during a fifty-minute class period. Students demonstrate comprehension of a command (or a series of commands) by physical performance. One word commands ("Jump !" "Stand !" "Sit !") quickly lead to increasingly complex sentences in the imperative form. As training progresses, playful, surprising, even "zany" commands may be used. Gradually, as the course proceeds, the students are requested, but not forced, to speak using commands, to use commands to manipulate the

instructor's behavior and to respond to questions. Correction of pronunciation usually focuses only on global errors when the speech is (or would be) incomprehensible. Reading and writing materials are initially based on the commands but students eventually read short excerpts from newspapers and magazines. Many teachers in the United States begin the school year with TPR and then gradually integrate textbook materials (for example, dialogues and pattern drills) after the students have been exposed to an extended period of listening--at least fifteen hours. Most vocabulary and grammar concepts can be rephrased in the command format, especially those found in many beginning textbooks.

In answer to such obvious questions as how can items like verb tenses and abstractions be taught through commands, Asher provides the following answers:

1) With imagination, almost any aspect of the linguistic code for the target language can be communicated through commands. For example, the future tense can be incorporated (or "nested") into a command such as, "John will walk to the door and Mary will write John's name on the blackboard." The past tense can be incorporated into the command structure. The teacher may say, for example, "Bill, run to the blackboard." After Bill has completed the appropriate action, the teacher says, "Joan, since Bill has run to the blackboard, run after him and give him your book." The present and future tenses can be combined in a command such as the following: "When Michael walks to

the window, Diane will write Michael's name on the blackboard."

2) For the teaching of abstractions, cards can be used with the foreign language term on one side and the native language equivalent on the other. The instructor can then say, "Bill, pick up 'justice' and give it to Catherine." "John, throw 'government' to me !" Non-physical vocabulary items and non-physical structural features can be embedded in motor responses. The instructor may say, for example, "Mary, pick up the picture of the ugly old man and put it next to the picture of the government building."

Asher believes that not all instructional problems in teaching a second language can be solved with one approach and that variety is essential to maintaining the student's attention and continued interest. Nonetheless, from his twenty years of research in TPR, Asher declares that most students (80%) can rapidly internalize the linguistic code--the structure of the language and vocabulary--when language is synchronized with actual body movement. In studies conducted in the United States, it has been found that consistently superior results in listening skill have been achieved by students using TPR over students using such other approaches as the audio-lingual method. In such languages as Spanish where there is a "fit" between orthography and phonology, there is a large degree of positive transfer of learning in TPR from listening comprehension to other skills such as speaking, reading and writing. Concerning speaking, in particular, there is a very positive transfer

from listening comprehension to production; after some sixty hours of instruction in, say, Spanish, much of which is directed to listening, students can invent skits and act them out. (The goal in TPR is a spontaneous shift from listening to a level of production in which the student's vocal output is intelligible to a native speaker). Studies in the United States have also confirmed that physically responding to commands improves 1) short-term memory; 2) long-term memory; and 3) the ability to transpose linguistic elements in order to comprehend novel utterances.

In the 1950's in France, Dr. Alfred Tomatis began his research into the ear and the voice and subsequently developed a unique system for treating dyslexia and communication problems, on the one hand, and teaching basic elements of foreign languages, on the other. A medical doctor, therapist and researcher, Tomatis emphasizes the training of the ear and the development of the memory through listening and repetition, as well as unconscious assimilation of, or indirect attention to program materials. Two of Tomatis' important discoveries include the "electronic ear," a special machine placed between the earphones and the tape recorder, which machine retrains the subject's ear to hear foreign language sounds in the manner of the appropriate native speaker, and "filtered music" that gradually reproduces the high-frequency sound conditions of the mother's womb and which is used in the passive phase of Tomatis' programs for the treatment of dyslexia and communication problems.

The Tomatis program consists of two major parts: the passive phase (listening training), during which the child listens to sounds, and the active phase (audio-vocal training) which requires the subject's active and vocal participation. Employed throughout much of the program is the special electronic equipment designed by Tomatis and, in particular, the "electronic ear."

During the first (or passive) phase, the child receives auditory stimulation through earphones which include a vibrating device placed on the forehead. Music is used in the initial stages of a "retour sonique"--a return to the high-frequency sound conditions of the mother's womb. The child listens to Mozart's symphonies or violin concerti--for Tomatis, Mozart is the universal composer, although such baroque composers as Vivaldi are also used. At first the music is unfiltered but, as the thirty-five minute sessions proceed, the music becomes more and more filtered so that, finally, only those frequencies above 8,000 Herz are present in the musical piece. (According to the research that has been conducted by Tomatis and his associates, high frequencies bring about a state of relaxation, on the one hand, and stimulate the cortex, on the other. The violin is the musical instrument with the most high frequencies). During the passive phase, the child is not entirely "passive"; he or she is engaged in such creative activities as drawing while listening to the appropriate musical sounds through the ear phones.

With session fifteen, the child begins listening to a recording of the mother's voice, at first in a very filtered form

(i.e., only those frequencies above 8,000 Herz are present). The mother's voice is perceived as one perceived it in the womb. Tomatis uses female voices in his various language programs, especially in the beginning stages. The male voice, the voice of the "father," is heard later. In foreign-language training, a female native speaker with a maternal-sounding voice replaces the mother.

From sessions fifteen through fifty, in the various stages of what is called an "accouchement sonique" (sonic birth), the maternal voice becomes less filtered as the missing frequencies are gradually reintroduced. In the same way as a baby progressively hears during the ten days after birth in his evolution from the liquid world of the foetal ear to the sound world of air, one begins to hear a thin voice, then a more complete voice and finally the full voice of the mother reading a story. The mother undergoes voice training, if necessary, in order to learn to position her voice correctly and the reading proper is done under the "electronic ear" to improve the timbre of the voice.

The purpose of the active training phase in the Tomatis program is to help the child use his new listening ability properly. During this phase, the child is asked to listen to tapes of different kinds (songs, words, sentences, for example) while under the "electronic ear" and to reproduce vocally what he hears into a microphone. Singing is particularly favored as a memory-training and linguistic-structuring device. The reproduced sound is automatically adjusted by the electronic

equipment so that the child hears his or her own voice correctly. During the audio-vocal training period, a balance system permits the sounds to be focused progressively on the right ear (i.e., the left hemisphere of the brain) which Tomatis believes is the key to proper listening. The child is encouraged to read aloud, both during the sessions and at home. This active phase continues through a series of sessions and control interviews until a combination of the results of the listening tests, observations, reading tests and interviews signals an end to the program.

In a number of Tomatis Centers, the system of active/passive phases is applied to the learning of the basic elements of a foreign language. Vocabulary taught takes word frequency and sounds into account. For example, those words first used in an English program are those which are rich in high frequencies, the sibilants.

Separate from (or as a part of) lessons in class, at least ten to fifteen minutes a day are devoted to phonetics exercises while the students' head phones are attached to the "electronic ear." These phonetics exercises involve sounds, rhythms and intonation patterns, i.e., those elements of the foreign language that the student usually has the most problems learning. The phonetics exercises involve continual student participation.

Tomatis emphasizes that a very effective technique for learning foreign languages is the combination of audio and visual elements: "Le sujet, livré à lui-même devant l'appareillage, suit des yeux l'image qui lui est projetée tandis que le texte

s'y rapportant lui est injecté dans les oreilles par un casque d'écoute relié à un magnétophone" (L'Intégration des Langues Vivantes, p. 32). Parallel to the phonetics exercises, visual images can be projected onto a screen so that the student can coordinate sound and image.

Following this special training with the "electronic ear" and together with it after an introductory period, the student must, of course, be taught grammar and vocabulary. Tomatis' language programs involve a movement from son to sens. Tomatis says that his programs can be used in conjunction with recognized modern methods and/or combined with scientific research in such fields as phonetics and phonology. Statistics issued by the various Tomatis Centers tend towards the personal, but independent Belgian and Canadian studies have been conducted which prove the effectiveness of the Tomatis Method.

In the 1960's, a Bulgarian medical doctor, Georgi Lozanov, discovered that certain yogic techniques of physical and mental relaxation could be used to produce not only relief from pain but also improved memory and concentration. His system, Suggestology, which was originally used in medicine and psychotherapy, was subsequently applied to education--in particular, to subjects like foreign languages which require, at least initially, the memorization of large amounts of basic factual materials. In the late 1960's and early 1970's at the Institute of Suggestology headed by Dr. Lozanov, a team of experts led by Aleko Novakov

combined yoga relaxation and verbal suggestion with the direct method to produce a unique system of foreign language teaching: Suggestopedia.

At the Institute of Suggestology, three forms of language learning--activity, conscious analysis and unconscious assimilation--were incorporated into the original language class in what was termed the "suggestopedic cycle." The four-hour intensive class normally began with a review of the previous day's lesson in the form of conversational exchange, physical activity, songs, games and, later on in the course, story-telling, plays and sketches. To help overcome inhibitions and to allow for more spontaneous expression in the classroom, each student was given a new name and a new profession. Each "foreign" identity assigned contained repetitions of one or more phonemes that students would find difficult to pronounce in the target language. Mechanistic repetition of language patterns and rigid structural exercises were avoided. Although exercises were used and errors corrected, the student was encouraged to react "freely" to a given situation in the foreign language.

In the second part of the suggestopedic language class, conscious analysis was realized in the form of reading, grammar and translation. The new material presented to the students consisted largely of dialogues based on "real life." The dialogues in the first course, for example, involved general or universal situations and group activities (home, family,

renting a hotel room, eating in a restaurant, city and country tours, cultural events) and were designed to stimulate positive emotions in the students. (In addition, events or activities are more easily remembered than static tableaux and a series of events is easier to act out and communicate orally). The dialogues were originally arranged on the page in groups of three, with five groups of three phrases or sentence fragments to a page. The translation of each word-group was provided in a column at the right of the page. All phrases were simple and straightforward and, as in Soviet sleep-learning programs, each phrase presented one information unit. Since, during the original séance or relaxation session, each word-group was read during a time span of eight seconds and three phrases were read in twenty-four seconds, each page of dialogue involved two minutes and each ten-page dialogue twenty minutes of reading. Twenty minutes is considered to be the ideal meditation period in yoga.

The third part of the suggestopedic language class, the séance or relaxation session, provided for memorization of the new material at an unconscious level. Originally, at least for the "concert" part, the alternate Savasana posture was used. (In this variant of the "corpse" pose, one does not lie down on the floor but reclines in a specially constructed chair with a pillow or headrest). The students were trained to breathe deeply and rhythmically as a group to a count of eight that accorded with the teacher's reading of the language material and/or with

the beat of the baroque slow movements in the background.

Originally based on two forms of yoga concentration (outer/inner), the séance was divided into two parts, active and passive, with active or outward concentration on the material preceding the rest and relaxation of passive meditation on the text. During the active session, the three words or phrases of each group were presented together, each with a different intonation or voice level: Where do you study English?--declarative; We study English at the Institute of Suggestology--whisper; Is the Institute a school for foreign languages?--loud command. The three intonations (declarative, whisper, loud command) correspond to three forms of yoga suggestion. (The Bulgarian translation of each word group was read first--quickly and in a monotone). During the active session, the students looked at the dialogue on the printed page and repeated to themselves (using the technique of inner speech) the foreign-language words and phrases.

The original concert session (or passive part of the séance) was divided into three parts: 1) a two-minute introduction which served as a "countdown" (the opening Sarabande from Bach's Goldberg Variations played on the harpsichord with a metronome speed of 70 to 80, the beat of the normal human pulse); 2) a series of slow movements from baroque concerti grossi, lasting some twenty minutes, over which the teacher acted out the lesson dialogue with an emotional or artistic intonation and during which the

students, with eyes closed, meditated on or visualized the text; 3) an allegro flute excerpt in a major key from baroque music, lasting some two minutes, which brought the students out of their deeply relaxed state. (This three-part "concert" corresponds to a three-part session in music therapy: calming-down; relaxation; awakening. In addition, according to books on music therapy, the association of music with a certain voice quality brings about a state of profound relaxation in the subject).

The slow movements used in the original concert, excerpted from the concerti grossi of Corelli, Handel, Bach, Vivaldi and Telemann, have, by definition, a rhythm of 60 beats to the minute (MM 60), the ideal beat for meditation in Indian music. A sustained melody in the violin or string section and a steady bass accompaniment are other important features of baroque slow movements composed during the period 1700-1750. In the original concert session, the teacher maintained the correct rhythm of the language dialogues while giving each phrase an artistic reading. The lyrical and rhythmic music, the artistic and rhythmic rendering of the text by the teacher, the rhythmic, deep breathing and meditative state of the students ("concert pseudo-passivity") contributed to a marked decrease in fatigue and tension and a marked increase in the memorization of foreign-language materials. The concert session, in particular, favored a process Novakov called "interiorization of language," which furthered the students' ability to speak and communicate, as well as memorize.

According to what might be termed somewhat extravagant Bulgarian statistics, Suggestopedia speeds up (or speeded up) learning five to fifty times. More objective data, however, regarding the effectiveness of the method has been provided by the Americans. In experiments in schools and universities in the United States conducted under the auspices of the Society for Accelerative Learning and Teaching (SALT), adaptations of Suggestopedia have speeded up learning and improved retention by 2.5 to 3 times.

Since the three methods outlined in this paper appear, at first glance, to be very different one from the other, what, it might well be asked, are the elements they have in common? And what are the common elements that make them successful, especially with beginning students?

First of all, the three methods in question are based on the way in which children learn their native tongue, a "successful" approach in which listening comprehension precedes speaking which, in turn, precedes reading and writing. As in childhood, acquisition of the language and the ability to pronounce its words is initially developed through listening; memorization of vocabulary items is enhanced through repetition. All three methods emphasize the use of such memory-enhancing and linguistic-structuring devices as games, songs and play activity (as in childhood) and Suggestopedia and Total Physical Response make frequent use of role-playing or role-reversal (in which the student plays the teacher).

All three methods emphasize that learning a second or foreign language should be a "natural" experience. Emphasis is placed on communicative competence and language materials are, at least initially, in the form of such realistic utterances as commands and dialogues. Materials used are based on situations students would normally encounter in real life. Asher, for example, recommends that the ideal training environment for the language student would be an actual office, kitchen and so on; Bulgarian students at the Institute of Suggestology are (or were) led into the street in order to practise their dialogues (renting a hotel room, touring the city, for example) in a natural setting.

Language in all three methods is perceived globally or, in Asher's words, in "chunks" or blocks. Attention to detail comes later. According to Asher, the "chunking phenomenon" means that a "cognitive map" of the "linguistic code of the target language" is more rapidly assimilated by the beginning student ("Learning a Second Language through Commands," MLJ, 58 [1974], 31). Moreover, learning by these methods is "holistic" in that the learning process contributes to the personal growth and satisfaction of the student. The classroom atmosphere is non-threatening and there is constant positive feedback regarding student achievement. All three methods stress the importance of the teacher's personality, as well as his/her competence, and all believe in attracting the confidence of the student and building up the student's motivation in a positive and pleasant learning environment.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, all three methods are based on implicit learning. To paraphrase Asher, they "play to the right hemisphere of the brain" (Learning Another Language Through Actions, p. 24). In Total Physical Response, the student masters the basic linguistic code of the target language through physical activity, coordination of language with body movement and indirect attention (i.e., the student pays direct attention towards the physical action of, say, going to the door, and indirect attention to the language of the command being used). While listening to the "filtered music" and the voice of his/her mother reading a story during the passive phase of the Tomatis program, the child is usually engaged in drawing and games. The materials are absorbed through indirect attention or unconscious assimilation. In Suggestopedia, the séance or session is especially designed to promote the absorption of language materials through unconscious assimilation; rhythmic presentation, special tone of voice and relaxation techniques are used to enhance the process. It is to be noted further that the Tomatis Method and Suggestopedia make use of similar forms of music as well as active/passive phases or sessions in the presentation of material or in the training process. Since, according to Marshall McLuhan, television has fundamentally altered the way in which students absorb information, these "modern" methods based, in whole or in part, on indirect attention or unconscious assimilation are especially appropriate for use in today's classroom.

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